

PARTNER DEFENDS THE CATHEDRAL ARCHITECT

La Farge Sailed Not Expecting Immediate Action on His Contract, Morris Says.

HITS BACK AT R. A. CRAM

Says Change to Anglican-Gothic Would Narrow Cathedral's Expression, Decided On by Bishop Potter and Others.

In a defense of the position of C. Grant La Farge, the architect, who has been displaced by Ralph Adams Cram as the architectural authority of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Benjamin Wistar Morris, the partner of Mr. La Farge, said last night that the committee on fabric of the cathedral trustees had departed entirely from the original standards and plan and had elected to follow a narrow, un-American plan.

The selection of Mr. Cram, and consequent dismissal of Mr. La Farge, who, with his partner, the late Mr. Heins, drew the original plans, indicated, said Mr. Morris, their decision to depart from the plan of having the cathedral represent all of the best in architecture and to follow instead an Anglican-Gothic style.

Further, Mr. Morris said, the change of the trustees' committee on this point was emblematic of their determination to have the cathedral stand, not as at first planned, for the Episcopal Church in America, the world's religious haven, but for a modified and half-dependent Church of England.

The minor criticism, voiced by the Rev. Dr. William M. Grossvenor, now the head of the cathedral committee on fabric, that the original plans and cuts as designed by Heins and La Farge would not at all represent the cathedral as it would be when finished, Mr. Morris passed with the answer that any architect worth of such a great trust could find innumerable points to improve his original design in a work of such magnitude.

The Rev. Dr. William M. Grossvenor was apprised of the Morris letter by The Tribune last night over the telephone. From his home in New Canaan, Conn., Dr. Grossvenor said that the idea of the trustees in reaching their decision as to the choice of architects for the future work on the cathedral had been to broaden its functions rather than to narrow them, as Mr. Morris inferred.

Open to All Architects.

"The trustees want to open the cathedral to all the architects of the country," said Dr. Grossvenor. "We want to give to all men a chance to put themselves into the life of the cathedral. If that is narrowing the scope of the work in any way, let them make the most of it."

Dr. Grossvenor said he had been misquoted in the first interview had with him on the subject in relation to his statements about the windows of the portion of the cathedral which is now finished.

What I said was that the windows were Romanesque in the original plans," said Dr. Grossvenor, and that Mr. La Farge himself saw fit to change them to Gothic.

As to Mr. Morris's charge that the change in architects meant that the plans were to be narrowed to a single style, the Anglican-Gothic, Dr. Grossvenor declined to comment, and he took the same position with reference to Mr. Morris's statement that the change in style of architecture meant a change of front by the trustees, as to the general functions of the cathedral, which he dismissed.

Mr. Morris's defense of his partner was in the form of a letter to the editor of The Tribune, as follows:

Cathedral,
June 23, 1911.

To the Editor of The Tribune:
Sir:—On Tuesday evening last I was informed that the New York news papers were in possession of the information that Mr. Ralph Adams Cram had been retained by the trustees of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine to supersede Mr. La Farge as architect, and when interviewed made no careful answers to certain of the questions which were put to me.

I regret exceedingly the publicists which have been given up the early promises of the new cathedral, for which in no respect was of Mr. La Farge's or of my initiative. That so much has been printed in the public press, either of a speculative or inaccurate nature, that it is difficult to ascertain the real cause of the cathedral character, are reasons which I believe make it my duty to make a statement concerning some of the important facts and the general situation as I understand them.

The Contracts Discussed.

I have not seen the original contract which was made between the trustees of the cathedral and the firm of Heins & La Farge, but at the time Mr. La Farge suggested the formation of our partnership, he told me that the original contract, "an other terminal" or to say the least, the original and the dissolution of the partnership of Heins & La Farge, either by mutual agreement or by the death of either partner. Mr. Heins died in 1905, and shortly after in the same year, we entered into a written agreement with the trustees and Mr. La Farge for the execution, under his direction as architect, of certain work which had been opened up by the early trustees or architect of the cathedral, for which no respect was of Mr. La Farge's or of my initiative.

That so much has been printed in the public press, either of a speculative or inaccurate nature, that it is difficult to ascertain the real cause of the cathedral character, are reasons which I believe make it my duty to make a statement concerning some of the important facts and the general situation as I understand them.

Mr. La Farge has stated to me that the question as to his continuance was not touched upon at the time the contract was made, such action as it was, a matter of course, being left to the trustees, at least, such was his understanding. He became aware of a difference of views in matters of design, methods of construction and the like, in the work between himself as architect and certain members of the committee on fabric.

One of the early and most important of these differences was in connection with the manner of supporting the great arches of the transept. It was strongly urged upon him to arrange that the construction of these arches should be in reinforced concrete, and that they should be supported by an ordinary means.

Mr. Cram, as quoted in one of the papers, has stated that he put the facts before the National Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and consulted friends in the profession. He said they all told him his position was unassassable and he will accept the offer with the reservation noted above.

He has stated that "legality and propriety" was the reason for his position, and that he had been urged by his office to do the same by an ordinary means.

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